

I told the man that I always liked it when the Rams lost but I couldn't see them losing three straight, then I gave my order to the waitress and then I turned to the race results. "I'm a good friend of Henry Moreno's," he said, "he gives me tips. You know he was a drunk for 5 or 6 years, he's all straightened out now." I told him that I had read that in the papers. "I'm going to the races Sunday," he said, "I've got a hot tip." I told him I was trying to stay away from the races today, that I was fighting to stay away, and then my order came: tuna fish sandwich. "You remember 2 or 3 years ago?" he asked, "they said swordfish had lead in them. Maybe it was mercury. I catch my own tuna and can them, costs me 45 cents a can to can my tuna, it's a real rip-off." His order came. "Look at that hamburger," he said, "how the hell you gonna get your mouth around that?" "I'm not," I told him. He got quiet with the mouthfuls and I turned to the front page. "The market," I said before he could, "went up 35 points in one day. How the hell's a man gonna figure on a thing like that?" "The brokers don't know," he answered, "the analysts don't know, the investors don't know, nobody knows ...." "Somebody must know," I said. "Nobody knows," he said. "I mean," I suggested, "somebody somewhere must know ... one guy, maybe ...." "Nobody knows," he said.

When he finished his sandwich he picked up his bill. "Well, it was nice talking to you," he said. "Sure," I said, "take it easy."

People like that used to give me nervous fits and depressions for four or five hours after meeting them. Now I act just like they do, it's easy.

The waitress came up: "care for another coffee?" I told her yes, that would be nice and as she walked away I looked at her ass as if I were quite interested in it. It's best to keep acting normal, to hide in the crowd and stay out of sight, and the best way to hide is to act like everybody else. She came back with the coffee. "Care for a pie or something?" she asked. I told her, "naw, gotta keep the waistline down." She said, "ah, come on, ya only live once...." "O.k.," I said, "I'll take the blueberry with a scoop of vanilla ...."

As she walked away again I stared at her ass.

## INTERVIEW

are you getting mellow? he asked.

yes, I said.

do you re-write?  
yes.  
did you used to re-write?  
no.  
do you stick to form?  
yes.  
don't you think that something is lost in  
re-writing, that something is lost in  
sticking to form?  
yes, I do.  
do you think you'll be able to continue to write  
in this big house? and are you?  
yes. and am I what?  
writing in this house?  
yes.  
have you stopped running with all those  
women?  
yes.  
what will you write about?  
one woman, and the other things.  
but you've created this image ....  
have I?  
yes. how was Paris?  
large, filled with gas-fumes and people.  
do you have friends?  
there's a doctor, a lawyer and a maitre d'.  
it's not like it used to be.  
what do you mean?  
I mean, you used to run with bums.  
oh, relax, these guys are bums.  
now you have 3 bathrooms.  
yes, I piss in one, bathe in the other, shit in the  
3rd.  
but don't you fear ....  
oh yes, I always have.  
why did you get these mortgage payments on your back?  
tax write-off.

you once wrote that all a man needed was what he could carry in one suitcase.

I still think that's true.

do you think you're getting soft?

yes.

are you writing as well as you once did?

better.

how can that be?

believe me, I don't understand it either.

do you have any advice for young writers?

get old.

do you have any advice for old writers?

yes. never consider anything you wrote yesterday as important or good.

do you consider anything important?

oh, yes.

what do you consider important?

having great areas of time in which to do nothing at all and to have the ability to do that.

why do you drink so much?

I don't know.

have you ever analyzed it?

no, I'm afraid I'd start worrying about my god damned liver.

what will you do when you can't write any more?

fuck.

I mean, really.

well, really I'm like most writers:

I won't believe it.

who is the worst writer you've ever read?

well, there are two of them.

who?

George Bernard Shaw and Theodore Drieser.

why are they so bad?

just bad for me, you understand.

but why?

just a reaction. maybe they worked in areas I'm not fitted for.



you're being kind.

I'm a kind person.

many of your readers don't think so.

what do you think?

I think you're getting tired.

tiredness often helps create kindness. do you think I'm finished?

I'll know when I read your next work.

how will I know when you're finished?

I don't pose as a writer.

what do you pose as?

your interviewer.

I think you're a fairly good one. when will I know when you're finished?

I think we're both finished now, he said,  
turning off the tape machine.

#### WITHIN MY OWN MADNESS

I have always been fascinated by Chinese armies  
of the past,  
Adolph Hitler, slim young ladies in long dresses,  
a checkerboard without pieces, flags of any country,  
policemen of other countries, marmalade in the jar,  
people standing outside of movie houses, men with one arm,  
horses about ready to shit, how badly great actors act,  
canaries at night, frogs in the center of a road,  
bedsprings, the whirling of turds in a toilet,  
paperclips, dark green, beds full of dying, betrayal,  
fear, dark green freeway signs, chickens, chicken dung,  
black traffic policemen, the deaths of president's wives,  
how badly great actresses act, the failure of the poets,  
the really really rich, the really really poor,  
the murderers  
and the murdered, the rapists and the raped  
what my mother dreamt

within my own madness I have not been so fascinated by  
myself, Italians, Jews, Englishmen,  
the Women's Liberation Movement,  
Spain, horse shows, the Pope, spinach, the sea,  
the mountains,  
the sunset